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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: SPLM LEADERS TELL SPECIAL ENVOY (SE) NCP MUST BE HELD ACCOUNTABLE

Classified By: CDA Robert E. Whitehead for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

¶1. (SBU) Summary: While the SPLM welcomes SE Gration,s engagement on the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA), senior leaders from Southern Sudan remain doubtful that Khartoum will implement any agreement it signs. SPLM members told SE Gration that the south suffers from U.S. imposed sanctions on Sudan, but they insisted that any relaxation in sanctions against Khartoum should be tied to real progress toward implementation of the CPA. They believe the NCP will continue to stall on resolving the census issue, and that NCP foot-dragging poses a risk to the elections and the referendum as well. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (SBU) At a dinner honoring U.S. Special Envoy Scott Gration in Juba August 18, a host of Sudan People,s Liberation Movement (SPLM) luminaries expressed their confidence in SE Gration,s mission, and in the impact the Obama administration might have on Sudanese politics. Alongside Pagan Amun, Luka Biong Deng, Malik Agar and Oyai Deng Ajak, government of National Unity Minister of Foreign Affairs Deng Alor pledged that, despite some maladroit public statements by Southern leaders, the SPLM will always cooperate with SE Gration,s mission in Sudan. Pagan Amun wryly noted that SE Gration was either the "luckiest or unluckiest" of all special envoys, having arrived on the scene in time to see the Comprehensive Peace Agreement through to its end. Amun noted that General Gration,s leadership and engagement on CPA issues had recreated a sense of hope within the SPLM. Government of Southern Sudan Minister of Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng said that both the SPLM and SE Gration need a common understanding of the mutual expectations of both sides. Concerned about a recent U.S. Institutes of Peace report on Southern Sudan, Deng said it appeared to reflect official U.S. skepticism about the prospects that Southern Sudan would become a functional state should it opt for independence, an implication that SE Gration downplayed.

¶3. (SBU) On the issue of the National Congress Party (NCP), Pagan Amun, publicly one of the most combative critics of Khartoum, began by saying that NCP members were "not bad people," but that they had chosen to take actions and policies that have had a destructive impact on all of Sudan. Most immediately, Amun reminded SE Gration that the implementation of the agreements, not the act of signing or the signed documents themselves, is of paramount importance for the SPLM. Amun warned that the NCP wants to renege on the referendum because Khartoum has defined its interest in the south not in terms of a congenial bilateral relationship, but rather as "money in our pockets." Alor referred to Amun,s public remark threatening a unilateral declaration of independence, and commented that the NCP knows Southern Sudan

will vote for independence, and thus the NCP will attempt to frustrate the process every step of the way to 2011. Governor Malik Agar said that Presidential Advisor Dr. Ghazi Salahuddin's "concern" about Amun's comment did not outweigh the GOSS' concern about public statements by Sudanese President Omar Al-Bashir that, Agar said, reveal his intention to scuttle the referendum. Agar said the NCP's focus on technicalities and its last minute decision to come to Juba for a scant four hours of negotiations revealed the lack of seriousness in the NCP's part. "We need to focus on implementation," Agar stressed. "We have already agreed to this stuff before."

¶4. (SBU) SPLM members present offered ideas about how U.S. policy towards the north should proceed at this moment in Sudan's history. "All of us want sanctions removed," said Amun. "We suffer from them too. But can we remove sanctions in a way that improves the outcome of the peace process?" Deng advised that it was important for SE Gration to link the lifting of Sanctions and removal of Sudan from the State Sponsors of Terrorism list to progress on CPA implementation. Malik Agar was cynical over Khartoum's recent good behavior, saying his own Blue Nile state had not yet seen the return of the expelled NGOs. SE Gration told the group that he would hold both sides accountable if they do not deliver on their commitments. "Don't be subtle, with them or with us!" Ajak chimed in. "Be very clear."

¶5. (SBU) Deng Alor told SE Gration that both parties to the CPA will most likely continue wealth sharing and using the same oil infrastructure after 2011. Luka Biong Deng said he was concerned that SE Gration had not yet affirmed his support for the referendum. Much like the removal of a

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single important bolt can cause a car to collapse, Malik Agar added, the removal of the south from Sudan would cause other parts of the country to secede. SPLM members told the Special Envoy that by refusing to discuss the disagreement over the census, the trilateral talks are "back to square one." This is a major issue, Luka Biong Deng said, and one which the GOSS wants to resolve prior to the elections in ¶2010.

¶6. (C) COMMENT: Although the August 19 talks in Juba ended with genuine signatures, firm handshakes and as yet unbroken promises, the concerns of the SPLM leaders at the dinner underscored the problem inherent in dealing with the "big picture" issues that are at the heart of the disagreement between the parties. The blunt Pagan Amun showed no reticence in reprising for the Special Envoy his warning of a unilateral declaration of independence, and SPLM leaders seem uninterested in reining him in. SPLM leaders will continue to work within the trilateral process, but their perception that the NCP is not an honest interlocutor makes prospects of separation increasingly inevitable.

¶7. (U) SE Gration's office cleared this cable.
WHITEHEAD